

## **A Fighting Spirit Brings America's Warriors to London's Paralympics**

by Staff Sgt. Tracy J. Smith  
Warrior Transition Brigade, Fort Stewart, Ga.

LONDON, August 30, 2012- With a nod to science, applause to human ambition, and empowerment, London opened the 2012 Paralympics to an overflowing Olympic Stadium and welcomed the world in brilliant fashion.

This homecoming marked a celebration of neurologist Sir Ludwig Guttmann's introduction of sport as a as therapy to injured War Fighters of World War II to build strength and confidence.

The introduction of Team U.S.A. gives testament to Guttmann's theory as this year's team boasts 20 service men and women in its ranks, accounting for ten percent of America's Paralympian representatives.

Scott Winkler is not unique to the challenge of sport. After a 2003 accident in Iraq left him paralyzed the retired U.S. Army Veteran found it easy to embrace the spirit of athleticism through willful determination.

"I fought for my country," Winkler said. "Now I win for it."

Winkler's mantra of 'if you believe, you can achieve' motivated him to a 5th place finish in the Beijing Paralympics in 2008, his first world event. He then went on to win several gold and bronze medals at the Para Pan American Games in both shot-put and discus.

This year he can be seen front row, leading the way into the stadium behind the unfurled glory of red, white and blue marveling at the 80-thousand plus crowd of London welcoming these athletes who have overcome so much to take part.

"Sport is about what you can do, what you can achieve," said Sir Sebastian Coe, Chair of the London Organizing Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. "Sport shows what is possible. Sport refuses to take no for an answer."

It is this adherence to showcase ability that led Royal Marine Joe Townsend, who lost both legs to an Improvised Explosive Device in Afghanistan, to zipline 350-feet to the Paralympic cauldron for the official lighting of the torch.

"Prepare to be inspired," Coe concluded. "Prepare to be dazzled. Prepare to be moved."

Other U.S. Army athletes who have made the successful transition from the battlefield to the playing field are:

Archery –  
Dugie Denton  
Jerry Shields  
Russell Wolfe

Cycling -  
Jennifer Schuble

Shooting-  
Eric Hollen  
SFC Josh Olsen

Sitting Volleyball-  
Kari Miller

Soccer Seven-a-side  
Gavin Sibayan

Track and Field  
CeCe Mazyk  
Scot Severn  
Scott Winkler

# # #



The 2012 Paralympic Games Opening Ceremony kicked off at at the Olympic Stadium, London, Wed., Aug. 29. The 2012 U.S. Paralympic Team of 227 Americans named to participated in the parade around Olympic Stadium. The team includes 20 U.S. military veterans and active duty service members.

U.S. Army Photo - SSG Tracy Smith, Warrior Transition Brigade, Fort Stewart.